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SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

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FROM AIT KAOHSIUNG BRANCH OFFICE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KAOHSIUNG VICE MAYOR SUDDENLY REPLACED

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1. (SBU) Summary: Kaohsiung City Government announced the appointment of new Vice Mayor Lee Yung-te to replace out-going Chiu Tai-shan on August 16. Although the media reported in early August that Chiu had privately informed Mayor Chen Chu of his willingness to resign following accusations of incompetence, Mayor Chen adamantly denied those reports until she announced the appointment of a new Vice Mayor on August 16. The timing of the switch came as a surprise to the out-going Vice Mayor, who was not even in town when his executive assistant was informed by the Mayor's office that he was being replaced. The in-coming Vice Mayor Lee Yung-te, who is of Hakka descent, was the former Executive Yuan Hakka Affairs Council Chairman from 2005 to 2008 and has extensive experience in the media industry. The move by the Mayor to replace Chiu Tai-shan with the media savvy Lee Yung-te is seen by many as a way for her to prepare for her reelection campaign by using Lee to handle the media and help garner Hakka votes. End summary.

Outgoing Vice Mayor Upset by the Short Notice

2. (SBU) The outgoing Vice Mayor's Executive Assistant Lee Chung-che told AIT/K that the Mayor's office informed him on August 13 that Vice Mayor Chiu should clean out his office by August 15. Only later did Mayor Chen Chu call Chiu to let him know he was being replaced. (Chiu received the call while visiting his wife in the U.S.) On August 16, the Mayor informed the press that Lee Yung-te would replace Chiu as Vice Mayor on August 18. Chiu's Executive Assistant told AIT/K that the former Vice Mayor was furious over the way the Mayor handled the situation. Although Chiu had offered his resignation verbally to the Mayor in June, Chiu had received no indication of if or when the Mayor would replace him. Chiu thought it was particularly rude of the Mayor to kick him out even before he could get back from the States to clean out his office.

Mayor Chen Chu's Re-election Bid

3. (SBU) Chiu's ouster is likely part of the Mayor's longer-term effort to get ready for the 2010 Mayoral election. The new Vice Mayor, Lee Yung-te, is of Hakka descent and comes from Mei-nung Village in Kaohsiung County. His Hakka origins may boost the Mayor's candidacy since the Hakka community constitutes 13 percent of the eligible voters in Kaohsiung. Lee's history in journalism may also prove a valuable asset in promoting Chen Chu's expected reelection bid.

Bio of New Vice Mayor Lee Yung-te

14. (U) Lee was born on May 30, 1955 in Mei-nung Village, Kaohsiung County. Lee graduated from National Cheng Chi University in 1976. He worked as a Researcher at the College of Mass Communication in Stanford University in association with the Knight Ridder Foundation from 2000 to 2001. He most recently served as the Executive Yuan Hakka Affairs Council Chairman from 2005 to 2008 and as Vice Chairman in 2004. He has also worked as the General Manager of a Public Television Service Foundation and as a reporter and Chief Editor for the defunct Independent Evening Post.

Comment

15. (SBU) Although many in Mayor Chen Chu's own party (DPP) doubt her ability to wage a successful reelection campaign due to her poor health, this recent replacement of her Vice Mayor is one more indicator that she intends to run again in 2010.

Yu

Wang